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Ms. Amy A. Hobby
BLS Clearance Office
Division of Management Systems
BLS, Room 4080
2 Massachusetts Ave, NE
Washington, DC 20212

Dear Ms. Hobby:

This is a brief note about including some questions from the American National Election Study in the 2008 NLS survey conducted by BLS. This is not a "comment," but rather a tip about additional information for BLS.

I've served on several NSF senior panels related to the National Election Study. Because of that, I've also been part of previous discussions with BLS and NSF on closely related topics, and I'm aware of the various sensitivities.

What I want to do in this note is simply to bring the attention of BLS to the Irish experience with the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). That survey, conducted by the Irish Central Statistics Office, is aimed primarily at collecting labor force information. However, a variety of "modules" are added from time to time to address particular social issues. In 2002, one of the modules concerned voter turnout (http://www.cso.ie/qnhs/social_mod_qnhs.htm).


The Irish CSO had many of the same concerns about politics-related survey questions that I've heard from BLS over the years. However, they were able to overcome them by offering respondents the option to skip the voter participation module.

The CSO also limited the nature of the voter turnout questions. Respondents were asked, for example, whether they were close to some political party. However, they were very carefully told that they would not be asked which party that might be. In other words, all partisan content was avoided.

The result of all this was an extremely useful survey of political participation in Ireland. Social scientists have made extensive use of it. It has been widely quoted there in a non-partisan way, and it is regarded as a real innovation and success for the Irish CSO. In fact, they feature it on their website.

In short, *the problems of having a government statistical agency do this kind of work have already been overcome by another healthy democracy.* I hope that their experience might be of interest and use to you as you think about your own plans to go forward with innovative surveys that might add to the health of our own democracy.

With many thanks for listening.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Chris Achen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "A".

Chris Achen